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Letters to the Editor

We received so many letters in response to Pat Robertson's article [July 1995], we decided to devote most of the page to them. The first two are in the form of "open letters."

Dear Rev. Robertson,

I write to you on behalf of the National Federation of Indian American Associations, NFIA--the largest Indian American umbrella organization in the USA representing all faiths, which urges all thoughtful men to kindly refrain from knocking down another man's faith to promote one's own theological agenda. Your suggesting that Hinduism be prevented from entering the USA smacks of hypocrisy and ignorance of American history! Ridiculing other religions does not reflect the Christian mind nor does it befit a religious leader in a country which has proclaimed itself to be a champion of human rights.

Whatever was the intent of your discussion, it has caused considerable distress, if not a sense of antagonism, towards your ministry and your pulpit.

Subash Radzan, President-elect, NFIA Atlanta, Georgia, USA

When Hindus go before a physical representation of a Godhead (and not all Hindus do), we worship the power of the Divine. For example, the ancient Hebrews used to carry the original Ten Commandments brought down by Moses in a sacred stone "ark." Mr. Robertson, you may rest assured that Hebrews prostrated themselves before that ark. Were the ancient Hebrews worshipping the ark itself, or were they showing great reverence for what the ark represented--which was the original actual written word of God? In case you have not figured it out, the ancient Hebrews were showing reverence for the power of God and not the actual stone tablets. The same holds true for Hindus.

Bernard Konowitz, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

We were both disappointed and distressed to learn about Pat Robertson's recent tirade against Hinduism. Even more disturbing is the knowledge that, with no dissenting viewpoint available to them, many of his viewers will accept his ignorance as truth. Mr. Robertson does not speak for all Christians.

Larry & Patti Looney, Austin, Texas, USA

For the last one century many other preachers like Pat Robertson have raised money by spreading hate. Even Swami Vivekananda in 1893, when he visited "Parliament of Religions" in Chicago, encountered hateful, vindictive rhetoric and ugly epithets. Swami Vivekananda wrote, "What have the Hindus done to these disciples of Christ, that every Christian child is taught to call the Hindus vile and wretches and the most horrible devil on the Earth?" How nice would it been if Mr. Robertson had used his good offices, resources and wealth to fight the social evils of American society which are rampant, i.e., child abuse, sexual abuse, wife abuse and domestic violence. Moral turpitude is so prevalent in the USA that illegitimacy, adultery, divorce and teenage suicide have become the norms of society.

Deen B. Chandora, MD Doraville, Georgia, USA

Hinduism has done no wrong to Robertson either personally, or to his organization or to Christianity in general. How can Christendom accept such hypocrisy? It is certainly not Hindus who are accountable for targeting Christianity and its fortresses. Hindus do not claim that their scripture is the true word of God, and neither have they any one book that could be classified as complete teachings or revelations. However, Hindu books on religion can fill a library.

Bramh D. Mishra, Sugar Land, Texas, USA

Robertson's odium against Hinduism and other non-Christian faiths is politically motivated. In recent years Westerners in large numbers have been turning to Hinduism and Buddhism to seek spiritual solace. Yoga and meditation are becoming part and parcel of Western life. This is a disturbing scenario for the super-conservatives such as Pat Robertson. This is the basis for Robertson's campaign of hate and malice against Hinduism.

Bansi Pandit, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, USA

Today's Christianity, particularly that proselytized by such as Pat Robertson is a self-fulfilling prophecy. They have become the evil that they seek to destroy. What is true of Pat Robertson is as true of fundamentalists everywhere, be they Christian, Moslem or whatever. They are all fear-based and lack love. When we have

unconditional love, we have the answer.

Swami Nostradamus Virato, 73072.2140@CompuServe.COM Asheville, North Carolina, USA

I strongly support Professor Kusumita Pedersen's proposal that a council be established for the purpose of giving Hindus an institutional voice with which to respond to such unreasonable and divisive public statements as those made by Pat Robertson. Membership should also be open to followers of Buddhism and other religions of Indian origin. Given our exposed position on the flat, parched ideological landscape of America today, we Hindus and Buddhists can no longer afford to remain passive observers of the assault on religious liberty.

Dharmaloka Shakya, Arya Marga Foundation, San Francisco, California, USA

I did not understand until reading your article yesterday why in recent weeks I have been hearing such negative comments about the yoga class I teach here at the prison. Several week ago, an outside "Christian" outreach group was speaking at the Sunday service and denounced yoga and meditation as "demonic devil worship." I brought this to the attention of the staff chaplain who contacted the group and reprimanded them for this unworthy pronouncement. A few days later I was again approached by some women who claimed they had heard in church that yoga was "devil worship." It is clear to me now where they are getting these ideas.

Jeri Becker, Frontera, California, USA

Mr. Robertson is ignorant of the moderate US cultural and religious freedom standard established by Thomas Paine, one of America's "founding fathers," who said, "Every religion is good that teaches man to be good."

Michael Wales, Palm Beach, Florida, USA

As a Guyanese in Cincinnati, I was overwhelmed with nostalgia as I read of the Guyanese in New York [August 1995]. No longer do I feel like the proverbial "wandering Jew." Through Hinduism Today I can say I have come full circle--back to my roots. I was born a Hindu and named Ramnarayan by my Hindu grandparents. I was baptized Catholic and Christened Edward Martin by my Portuguese god-mother Celestina Correia; I was confirmed a Lutheran and consecrated an evangelist and catechist-teacher. For ten years I taught all day in the Lutheran High School and then tried to convert the Hindus and Moslems by night. Having been disillusioned with the spirituality of the Lutherans, "the most spiritually immature of mainline Christian bodies," [The Lutheran magazine, May 1992], I avidly read the works of

Bede Griffiths, O. S. B., Anthony de Mellow, S. J., and Professor Raimundo Panikkar (all Catholic theologians whom the Pat Robertsons should read). Now the "demonic" denunciation by Pat Robertson has done it--like tea in hot water, he has drawn out the real strength inculcated in me by my Hindu grandparents. I can now say, "I have arrived," after forty years in the bewilderedness typical of Pat Robertson's USA. I am Hindu again.

Ramnarayan Lachman, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Praise and Gratitude:

I was full of curiosity about what you will have in the Internets World Wide Web. So, while I am here, I might as well drop in a line to tell you that I am learning and enjoying your newspaper. Your newspaper has helped to fill in some of the gaps, although I must say that I still need more elementary information to be able to appreciate Hinduism better. Looking forward to your forthcoming issues.

Yue Seong Swee, yuess@televue.com.sg, Singapore

On behalf of our Society, I wanted to thank you for running the photos with captions of the opening of Srila Prabhupada's samadhi mandiras well as the article about the persecution in Armenia [July 1995]. I am a regular reader of Hinduism Today and appreciate your efforts to illuminate this often darkened world.

Badri Narayan dasa, Chairman ISKCON Governing Body, San Diego, California, USA